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HOW IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

Yes No

- ☐ ☐ I am afraid of my spouse/partner.
- ☐ ☐ I cannot express my anger or my opinion for fear of my spouse/partner's reaction .
- ☐ ☐ I must always ask my spouse/partner for permission to see family or friends, spend money, or buy something for myself.
- ☐ ☐ I sometimes feel numb inside.
- ☐ ☐ I try and try to please my spouse/partner only to find that my efforts still do not please him.
- ☐ ☐ I am confused about the differences in the way my spouse/partner views our relationship and the way I see it.
- ☐ ☐ I often feel totally alone.
- ☐ ☐ I am beginning to believe all the terrible things my spouse/partner says about me. Sometimes I am not sure what is real anymore. Maybe I'm going crazy.

How do you feel about what is happening to you? Begin to trust your instincts about your situation. If you feel that you are being emotionally and/or physically abused, you are probably right. If you aren't sure, but answered "yes" to most of the questions above, you are probably a victim of your spouse/partner's abusive behavior.

Identifying yourself as a victim does not mean that you are to blame for what is happening in any way. Identifying yourself as a victim does not mean that you must leave the situation immediately. Your safety is what you should be most concerned about.

SECTION ONE

Understanding Domestic Violence

“. . . I didn't want to admit that I was a battered woman, that these terrible things were really going on in my home. I felt dirty and ashamed, as though I had done something wrong. But when I did face it and say it: "I am a battered woman," I found that there was help available to me and that the people who really cared for me did not turn away from me in embarrassment or disgust. It hurt to say those words, but once I did, I felt so much better.

— D.K., 34, survivor

Being physically or emotionally abused by a spouse/partner is a frightening and lonely experience. You may feel that you are the only person to whom this is happening. In reality, millions of women in the United States experience battering every year. Knowing that you are not the only one experiencing battering in an intimate relationship can help to free you from the shame and embarrassment you may be feeling and help you understand that the abuse does not occur because you are doing something “wrong” or that you do something to cause it to happen.

You Are Being Battered If...

- You have been slapped, shaken, pushed, bitten, punched, beaten, pinched, kicked, stabbed, had an object thrown at you, been hit with a weapon or shot.
- Your personal liberty has been restrained, you have been isolated from friends and family members, you have been locked out of the house or abandoned in dangerous places, you have not been allowed to practice your religious beliefs.
- You have no access to financial resources or no part in making financial decisions, prevented from seeking employment, denied proper medical care when ill or pregnant.

- You have been threatened, accused unjustly of having affairs, constantly criticized, humiliated in public, called derogatory names, had your thoughts and feelings constantly ignored or denied.
- You have been forced to perform unwanted sexual acts, raped, forced to have sex with others or to watch others, called demeaning sexual names.
- Your children have been abused to punish you, affection has been withheld as punishment, you have been forced to submit to reckless driving, property or pets that you value have been harmed or destroyed, you have been manipulated with lies, promises and contradictions.

It Is Still Abuse If . . .

- The incidents of physical abuse seem minor when compared to those you have read about, seen on television or heard other women talk about. There isn't a "better" or "worse" form of physical abuse; you can be severely injured as a result of being pushed, for example.
- The incidents of physical abuse have only occurred one or two times in the relationship. Studies indicate that if your spouse/partner has injured you once, it is likely he will continue to physically assault you.
- The physical assaults stopped when you became passive and gave up your right to express yourself as you desire, to move about freely and see others, and to make decisions. It is not a victory if you have to give up your rights as a person and a partner in exchange for not being assaulted!
- There has not been any physical violence. Many women are emotionally and verbally assaulted. This can be as equally frightening and is often more confusing to try to understand.

Abusive Behavior is a pattern which often includes intimidation, isolation, lies, threats and verbal abuse in addition to physical attacks and/or the threat of physical violence. All are forms of battering and control and should be taken seriously.

While the violence may be infrequent and minor in the early stages, it will probably get worse in intensity and frequency as time goes on.

In the past, you may have tried to minimize or deny the violence — telling yourself and others that what is happening is not really serious or that it is only a minor problem in an otherwise good relationship. You may have hidden your injuries from family and friends. You may have been dishonest with doctors and others about the cause of injuries. If you are in a same sex relationship, you may have denied the abuse to keep your relationship a secret. Do not feel guilty about these actions; they are coping skills you have developed to help you survive. It is not uncommon for people to minimize and deny dangerous and traumatic situations in their lives.

You may have thought at one time or another that you are responsible — at least partially — for the violence. You may have been told by others, especially your partner, that it is your fault. Batterers often try to promote the illusion that you “control” the violence. ***This is not true.*** The first step in understanding your situation is to put responsibility for the abuse where it belongs — with your partner.

You do not cause your partner to abuse you emotionally, physically or sexually. The abuser is solely responsible for the violence.

Abuse Can Happen In Any Type Of Relationship, Including If...

- you are not legally married to the abusive partner.

- You are in a same sex relationship with someone who abuses you emotionally, physically or sexually.
- You have formally or legally ended your relationship but your ex-spouse/partner continues to behave in an abusive manner towards you.
- You are not living with your spouse/partner but he is abusive to you.

Abusive behavior usually results from a combination of learned behavior and rigid stereotypical attitudes about male/female roles. As one batterer put it, “She couldn’t make me hit her, if I didn’t want to.” Traditionally, a woman’s role was seen as a caretaker one, that of keeping her mate and children happy and comfortable. This tradition is not one that serves us well — you cannot make everything okay by yourself. Such beliefs lead women in abusive relationships to accept blame for the violence. We have all heard sayings such as “What did you do to deserve this?” or “If you would just be a better parent, spouse, cook, etc. this would not be happening.”

By refusing to accept responsibility for your partner’s abusive behavior and by ending the denial that you lived with for months or years, you can begin to make changes in how you feel about yourself and your situation. You may need to forgive yourself for past events and behaviors which produced guilt and self-blame. Identifying yourself as a victim can be a difficult experience.

Consider thinking about yourself in new ways:

- **I am not to blame for being beaten and abused.**
- **I am not the cause of my partner’s violent behavior.**
- **I do not like being abused and do not have to take it.**
- **I am an important human being.**

- **I deserve to be treated with respect.**
- **I do have power over my own life.**
- **I can decide for myself what is best for me.**
- **I am not alone; I can ask others to help me.**
- **I am worth working for and changing for.**
- **I deserve to make my own life safe and healthy.**
- **I am a worthwhile person.**
- **As a human being and as a partner, I have rights.**
- **I can still love my partner and protect myself emotionally, sexually and physically.**
- **I can allow my partner to be responsible for himself.**

Consider what rights you have with your spouse/partner. The happiest, most fulfilling and longest lasting relationships are those that are egalitarian; that is, relationships where each partner is an equal of the other in decision-making, parenting, career, and finances, and where both partners are free and able to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas to the other.

You ARE an adult in an adult relationship. It is not necessary or appropriate that you be treated like a child or subjected to “discipline.” As an adult, you are capable of competent, responsible thought and action — and you deserve to be treated that way. Even if your partner has more experience in some areas, you also have the right to explore and develop your own skills in any area you choose.

SECTION TWO

Dynamics Of Domestic Violence

Common Misconceptions about Battering

There are a number of misconceptions about domestic violence that aid in society's denial of the problem. Most of these focus on blaming women for the violence instead of addressing the issue of why men abuse their partners. Some of the most common misconceptions include:

Myth: A woman, through her actions or behaviors, provokes the violence.

Fact: The use of violence has little to do with the woman's behavior and everything to do with her partner's need to control others, his choice to use physical force, his own attitudes and expectations about male/female roles, and the lack of negative consequences he experiences from his use of violence. If you are being abused, you have probably been told, at one time or another, that you do things which "cause" him to be violent. Remember, regardless of your behavior, it is your partner's choice and decision to use violence. Blaming you for his actions is just one of the ways he will deny responsibility for the abuse.

Myth: Women who stay in abusive relationships are asking to be beaten, and therefore must "enjoy the abuse."

Fact: This myth is especially insulting to someone who is being abused. No one wants to be beaten and, in fact, many women do leave. The reasons a woman may remain in an abusive relationship are varied and complex. It may be out of economic necessity, she may hope the abuse will end, or she may have religious beliefs or values about marriage and parenthood which make it difficult for her to leave. Most women are also threatened with severe harm to themselves or their children if they attempt to leave. This danger is real.

Myth: Domestic violence is caused by external factors or events, such as job stress, financial problems and alcohol/drug use.

Fact: The truth is while some or all of these factors may be present in an abusive relationship, none, separately or together, are the cause of your partner's violence. However, they are often used as convenient excuses for the abuse. It is important to know eliminating alcohol/drug use or minimizing the amount of stress in your relationship or in his environment will rarely stop the abuse.

Myth: Batterers are "out of control" and/or just have a problem expressing anger.

Fact: Abusers often report they "just have a bad temper" and temporarily "lost control" during the assault. In reality, however, most abusers control their use of violence quite well. They are usually NOT physically violent towards you in the presence of others, nor are they abusive to their boss, their friends, or their neighbors. They only use violence against their partners or their children in the privacy of their own home. They choose the time, place and people they will abuse.

Remember, violence is a learned behavior. Your partner uses it to control you and to get a variety of his needs met. This is not being out of control. Rather, it is exerting control.

Myth: Abuse does not affect the children in the family. Usually, they do not even know it is happening.

Fact: Abuse can have a devastating impact on children. Children usually have a very accurate perception of what is happening, even at a very early age.

There are certainly other myths that perpetuate violence against women by minimizing the seriousness of the situation and focusing on the woman's behavior instead of the abuser's choice to use

violence. If you have believed in these myths, you have probably been torn between your need for safety and the desire to preserve your relationship. Keep in mind an abuser will encourage a belief in these myths so the responsibility for the abuse will not be placed with him.

The Progression of Violence & Tactics of Control

In all probability, your partner was not abusive in the beginning stages of your relationship and, even now, does not always use physical violence. It is rare for an abuser to physically assault his partner prior to beginning a pattern of verbal abuse and emotional control. It is likely, as you look back on the relationship, you can begin to recognize how the abuse began in very subtle ways — through attacks on your feelings of self-worth, your abilities as a person, and by slowly isolating you from others. Often, it is not until a woman feels “trapped”, either emotionally, financially or socially, that she recognizes how destructive and abusive her partner has become. Frequently, the physical violence begins to increase in severity and intensity at this stage - after an abuser is reasonably sure his partner is isolated and cut off from much of her support system.

The tactics used by a batterer also involve much more than physical abuse. In addition to being assaulted, whether it is once a week, once a month, or once a year, most abusers engage in other behaviors which make their partners fearful and afraid. On the following page is a diagram of the “Power and Control Wheel”, developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota. The wheel serves as an illustration of the many tactics an abuser will use. It is often the use of the non-physical tactics which have the greatest impact on a woman’s feelings of self-worth.

Recognizing which of these tactics have been used by your partner may help you to understand how difficult it has been for you to see your alternatives and how these behaviors have been limiting your freedom, your safety and your self-determination.



Emotional Abuse

Most women who are being physically abused are also being emotionally abused. The most obvious type of emotional abuse is being constantly criticized or degraded. Your partner may also be emotionally abusive by ignoring you, withholding affection, calling you names, accusing you of having affairs, or telling you that you are an unfit mother, friend or spouse. Emotional abuse can be subtle and is often hard to recognize. It is also the most effective tactic to keep you from feeling you are deserving of love and respect.

Isolation

Most abusers will isolate their partners, geographically, emotionally, or socially, in order to keep them under their control. They move the family miles away from friends and relatives or discourage or forbid a woman from having close relationships with others. Women often report they are not allowed to see friends or family, get a job, have access to transportation, participate in religious/spiritual activities, or have outside interests or activities. Even if these activities are not strictly “forbidden”, abusers will often put such limits on them, by monitoring phone calls, interrogating her about her whereabouts, or publicly humiliating her, that it is simply easier to stop doing these things.

Minimizing, Denying and Blaming

Abusers blame their partner for the abuse by making them feel like they are “overreacting” to the violence. Abusers will minimize or deny the severity of their actions, and refuse to acknowledge any controlling behaviors. If they do acknowledge the violence, they will point to the woman’s behavior or demeanor and tell her this is why they used violence. This tactic is extremely effective at increasing a woman’s sense of responsibility, because she is aware that he will simply blame her for the assaults if she tells others about his behavior.

Economic Abuse

Many women report their partners frequently control access to their financial resources by withholding money from them, sabotaging their efforts to get or keep a job, berating them about how they spend money, and by lying about assets. Some abusers keep all bank accounts and credit cards in his name so his partner has no access to funds without his permission. Not having access to financial resources keeps women economically dependent on their abusers and is a major barrier to a woman who wants to leave the relationship.

Using Children

One of the most prevalent, yet often minimized, forms of abuse is

using your children to make you feel bad about yourself. Perhaps your partner has repeatedly told you that you are not a good mother and if you ever attempt to leave, he will fight you for custody. He may have even threatened to kidnap or kill the children if you make any effort to escape.

Many abusers also try to turn children against their mothers by telling lies or by threatening them with harm. These threats are very real to a woman in a battering relationship and may make her too afraid to leave.

Using Coercion and Threats

Your partner may threaten to increase the use of violence towards you or your children if you do not obey him at all costs. He may threaten suicide or threaten to harm other members of your family or your friends if you attempt to leave. If you are in a same-sex relationship, your partner may threaten to “out” you by revealing your relationship to those whom you might not want to know. Coercion can also include forcing you to commit illegal activities and subsequently threatening to report you to child protective services or law enforcement. These behaviors are designed to keep you afraid and to keep you from ending the relationship.

Using Male Privilege

Part of an abuser’s belief system is a feeling that they “own” their partners and children, and are entitled to demand absolute obedience from them. They often have very rigid attitudes about gender roles, acting like the “master of the castle” and treating their partner as a servant.

Intimidation

Intimidating behaviors and actions can range from threatening looks or gestures to slamming objects, destroying property, hurting or killing pets, and displaying weapons. An abuser will often destroy an item that has special meaning to his partner, while letting her know that she could be his next target.

Even though your partner might not always use physical violence, it is likely he is constantly utilizing many of these tactics to control and degrade you. If you have heard over and over again how worthless you are, how everything is your fault, and how you deserve to be “punished” for your failures, you are likely to begin to believe it. This is especially true if there is no one around to support you as a worthwhile person and who sees your partner’s abusive behavior as destructive and inappropriate.

Furthermore, given the isolation, the constant negative reinforcement and the violence you are experiencing, it is not uncommon for you to become increasingly confused about what is happening. You may begin to feel numb inside as your perceptions of yourself and your relationship become more and more distorted. You may be feeling immobilized — recognizing the dangers you face if you leave and realizing there is nothing you can do to stop the abuse if you stay. It is not uncommon for victims of battering to begin to exhibit symptoms similar to prisoners of war - they are disoriented, may be suffering from sleep deprivation, interrupted eating patterns, and shock. These symptoms are normal reactions to abnormal circumstances and do not mean you are “going crazy”.

Battering is a very powerful and effective form of control and any person experiencing this type of violence is likely to become temporarily immobilized. However, the more you can begin to understand what is happening, the better you will be at recognizing that he is responsible for his behavior and what is happening to you is not your fault.

SECTION THREE

Exploring Your Options

A message to women who have been battered or assaulted...

We are here for you. We won't judge, condemn, or tell you what to do. We will believe you. We will listen to you. We will offer our support, a safe space, food, transportation, emergency assistance and counseling. We will do our best to meet your needs as you become a survivor.

The ultimate choice that you face is whether to stay or to leave either temporarily or permanently. You may have left on several occasions in the past, only to change your mind and return a few days later. You may feel weak or embarrassed because you did return and found yourself being abused again.

Ending an important relationship in your life is not easy. At times you may be pressured by friends, family members and others to leave or stay in your relationship. You may feel extremely ambivalent and confused, sometimes wanting nothing more than to get away and at other times wanting to cling to the relationship and preserve it. Do not let self-blame immobilize you.

As you are considering your options, be aware of the following information about battering:

- It will probably happen again. Without outside help, the violence usually becomes more severe and more frequent over time.
- The batterer's promises to stop abusing you are often a form of manipulation designed to keep you in line and to prevent you from leaving.
- There is no guarantee that, even with the best counseling, your partner will change. Most batterers resist counseling and deny

they need help. Even if the physical assaults stop temporarily, be aware of how he may still be controlling you through isolation, intimidation and threats.

- You and your children deserve to feel safe and be safe from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

IF YOU STAY

If you decide at this time to stay with your abusive partner, there are some things you can try to make your situation better and to protect yourself and your children.

- **Contact the domestic violence/sexual assault program in your area.** They can provide emotional support, peer counseling, safe emergency housing, information, and other services while you are in the relationship, as well as if you decide to leave.
- **Build as strong a support system as your partner will allow.** Whenever possible, get involved with people and activities outside your home and encourage your children to do so.
- **Be kind to yourself!** Develop a positive way of looking at yourself and talking to yourself. Use affirmations to counter the negative comments you get from the abuser. Allow yourself time for doing things you enjoy.
- **Make an escape plan.** Since it is likely you will be abused again, having an escape plan can make the difference between being severely injured or killed and avoiding such a tragedy. A plan may include:
 1. A place to hide a set of car keys.
 2. A hidden emergency fund. Even if you can only manage to save one or two dollars at a time, begin building an emergency fund for the time when you may need some cash to get away.

3. Pack a suitcase with a couple changes of clothes for yourself and your family and leave it with a trusted friend or hide it where your partner won't find it. If possible, include copies of birth certificates, social security cards, and other legal papers for everyone in the family who will flee. You may need them. Also gather financial records, e.g., rent, mortgage, utility receipts, insurance cards, and checking and/or savings account books. If packing a suitcase isn't possible, fill one drawer of your dresser with items you will need.

4. Develop a plan for calling the police in an emergency. Older children might be coached to get to an extension phone or get to the neighbors if you cannot reach the phone. Some women even work out signals with understanding neighbors.

5. Know where you can go and how you will get there in case you have to leave suddenly.

6. Make arrangements for sheltering your pets.

- **Learn non-violent means of disciplining your children.** Since children often model adult behavior, it is very important you teach your children non-violent problem solving. There are resources in your community that can support you and provide you with suggestions.
- **Be honest with your children.** They are probably very aware that something is not right. Help them to understand that hitting someone is wrong and that they are not responsible for the abuser's behavior. They need to know that staying does not mean the violence is okay.
- **When you are in immediate danger, get out!** You can always return the next day if you wish. Planning for your safety and recognizing your options can help you protect yourself and your children. The domestic violence/sexual assault program in your area can offer you assistance with many of these services and volunteer advocates are available 24 hours a day.

Remember that you can change your mind and decide to leave at any time. Choosing to stay may seem the best option to you now, but if that changes, do not hesitate or feel guilty. You have a right to change your mind!

IF YOU LEAVE...

Leaving does not mean your partner will stop being abusive. In fact, he may become more abusive as you attempt to leave. He may be so afraid of “losing” you that he will increase any threats to hurt you, the children or himself. You are the best judge of how dangerous your situation may become if you attempt to leave.

You may also feel overwhelmed by financial concerns - including where you will live and how you will afford to take care of yourself and your children. Thinking about economic survival can be discouraging and frightening. The domestic violence/sexual assault program in your area can help you sort through the many challenges you have ahead and can help you get the emotional and financial support you may need.

If you have made a decision to leave permanently, allow yourself to feel the natural grief at the loss of your relationship. No matter how bad it was, there were good things too, and it was a very important part of your life. Leaving is often a process. Many women who have been battered leave and return several times before permanently separating from the relationship. Be patient with yourself.

You may feel emotions of loss, sadness, and depression. Accept these feelings as natural and allow yourself to experience them. If you find yourself thinking, “I’m stupid to care after what I’ve been through” or “I shouldn’t feel this way,” remind yourself, “it’s okay for me to be feeling this way now.”

Building a strong support system is essential when freeing yourself from a violent relationship and when making a healthy transition to being a survivor. This support system could include:

- concerned family and friends (they may need to do some reading or talk to an advocate to better understand your experience)
- an advocate from a domestic violence/sexual assault program
- a mental health counselor (if you choose to seek counseling)
- a member of the clergy or spiritual leader
- a support group
- your children

You have been strong enough to keep your family together under difficult circumstances. Now, with the help of a support system you can become strong enough to build a life without violence.

While there are certainly many additional questions and considerations you may face while you decide to stay or leave, these are a beginning. It may also be helpful to list the positives and negatives, or pros and cons of both staying and leaving. Questions other women have asked are:

- What do I gain by staying/leaving?
- What do my children gain by living in a violent home?
- What are my expectations for the future? How can I work to get them?
- What am I willing to do without if necessary - material things, my health, my emotional stability, my self-esteem, etc.?
- What is the price I've been paying to stay in this relationship?
- How will staying/leaving affect me one year/five years from now?
- What do I value? What do I want and need from myself and others?

HELP IS AVAILABLE

Whether you decide to stay or to leave, there are resources throughout Nebraska that can make your situation easier.

Although it is not possible to list the resources available in every community for legal assistance, law enforcement intervention, medical care, housing, transportation, financial assistance and other needed services, any of the domestic violence/sexual assault programs listed in this booklet can help you find out about these services in your area and provide you with crisis counseling and support. All domestic violence/sexual assault programs provide access to the following basic services.

Crisis Intervention and Advocacy:

Each program has a 24-hour crisis line you can call to obtain emergency shelter, transportation, and medical and legal referrals. You do not have to give your name if you choose to remain anonymous. You can call at any time to talk with an advocate. Staff and trained volunteers are available to listen to you, provide you emotional support and give you information about your options. They will support the decisions you make and assist you in carrying out those decisions.

Advocates are aware of your rights to social services, legal and medical assistance and are familiar with the procedures of these agencies/services. They can accompany you to court for civil and criminal court proceedings, provide on-going emotional support and peer counseling, and referrals to community resources for counseling, housing, employment, job training opportunities, educational programs, and others. They will usually provide you with agency names and telephone numbers for you to obtain needed appointments. However, if you have difficulty doing these things on your own (many women do because of past unsuccessful experiences with helping agencies), an advocate will be available to help you.

Emergency Transportation:

All programs can help you get to a place of safety. This might be transportation to the hospital, the shelter, or an appointment with an attorney or social services.

Emergency Financial Assistance:

Although most programs have extremely limited funds, they can help you get emergency monies for items such as food, clothing, child care, and long distance travel. Advocates can also help you access financial assistance from other sources for items such as housing, medical and legal assistance.

Emergency Shelter:

Each program in the state has emergency shelter services where you and your children can stay. The shelter facility is a safe refuge and is usually in a confidential location to make it harder for the abuser to find you and harm you. The shelters are comfortable, well furnished, and home-like. Usually you can stay long enough to rest and regain emotional and physical strength, make some decisions about your needs, and begin to put those decisions into action. Each shelter houses from one to several families at a time, so you will likely be in touch with other women who have had similar experiences. The facilities have house rules for the safety and convenience of everyone at the shelter. You will be asked to abide by those rules and cooperate in a communal living arrangement. Program staff is available to answer questions, provide emotional support and assist you with reestablishing yourself and your children.

In communities where formal shelter facilities do not exist, domestic violence/sexual assault programs provide shelter by alternate means. They will also assist you in getting to a nearby shelter if you wish. Most programs have some means of helping women relocate to another part of the country or can help you obtain the resources to relocate if you wish to do so. Advocates can get information about the availability of shelter programs and other services anywhere in the United States.

Making a decision to go to a shelter does not necessarily mean you are leaving forever. If you decide to go back home, the staff will support you in that decision.

Women's Support Groups:

Most programs offer a weekly support group for women who are in or have formally been in an abusive relationship (both those who stay in the shelter and those who do not). The support group is a safe place to share experiences and feelings with other women who have been abused and to learn new coping techniques for living.

Other Services:

In some areas of the state, the local program also provides support groups specifically for assisting your children and groups for abusers. Staff and volunteers are also trained to assist victims of sexual assault and can assist you or your children in working with incest, rape, or child sexual assault issues.

Domestic violence/sexual assault programs can be a very helpful resource to you, as the paid and volunteer staff are specifically educated about domestic violence and sexual assault. They also have information and knowledge of what local services you have a right to and the procedures for obtaining these services. Finally, they can help you understand and cope with your own feelings, fears, and confusion. They can provide vital support to you as you make important decisions about your life and the lives of your children. The services are available to you 24 hours a day and are **free of charge**.

The domestic violence/sexual assault program in your area will:

- provide emotional support and peer counseling.
- give you information about resources and options.
- treat you with respect and dignity.

The domestic violence/sexual assault program will not:

- pressure you into making any certain decision.
- deny services if you decide to return to the abuser.
- reveal confidential information about you to anyone outside the program without your written permission.

Any information you give to the program (with the exception of information concerning child abuse, suicide, and homicide) will be held in the strictest confidence.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Regardless if you decide to stay or leave the relationship, some women seek help from professional counselors, private therapists or clergy. While most of these individuals can be a valuable resource and extremely helpful, there are others who may not recognize the seriousness of the abuser's actions or who do not have an understanding of how the batterer's actions affect a person. Some women report they have been told they are contributing to the violence and they have to change their behaviors to become more assertive and understanding of their partners. Others are incorrectly labeled as suffering from "low self-esteem," being "co-dependent," or "enabling" the violence by staying or by not being "a good wife." All of these are placing the responsibility for the violence on you and could be increasing your risk of being seriously hurt or killed.

If you are seeing anyone who attributes the violence to these factors, it may be wise to seek out assistance from another individual or agency which has a clear understanding of domestic violence and does not place the responsibility for the violence on you. These beliefs and actions, even if they are done with the best intentions, indicate the person does not understand domestic violence and they could be encouraging you to do things that could be harmful to your safety.

SECTION FOUR

Legal Options Available to You

(Note: This section provides general information about legal options. It is not designated to provide specific advice, and may not be totally applicable in any particular case. If you have additional questions about your situation or your legal rights, you should seek the professional advice of a lawyer.)

The legal system, though by no means perfect or totally adequate, can provide you assistance. Below is a brief description of some of your legal options. You may contact your local domestic violence/sexual assault program for further information and for referrals to other agencies that can provide legal assistance and resources.

ARREST

Anytime your partner physically assaults you, he is committing a crime. You have the option to call the police during or after you have been assaulted; however, it is important to realize that the police may not arrest your partner. An arrest will depend on the police officer and the evidence available to support your report. If your partner is arrested, he may be taken into custody and transported to the jail, or he may simply receive a violation in the form of a written ticket requiring him to appear in court at a later date.

If your partner is arrested you can ask the officers about the legal process (i.e., bail, arraignment, trial, sentencing) and what to expect. It is important for you to know that pressing charges against the abuser is not your choice. The county attorney will make that decision and will likely ask you to testify against the abuser.

Making a decision to report a domestic violence incident is difficult. Making a statement, signing a report, and giving court testimony can be frightening and nerve-racking. Advocates from your local domestic violence/sexual assault program can help explain the

legal process and help you through the necessary procedures by providing you with emotional support and referrals for legal assistance.

PROTECTION ORDERS

Under Nebraska's Protection From Domestic Abuse Act, you can file for a protection order. This order is available to: spouses or former spouses; persons who are not married but are living together or who have lived together in the past; persons who have a child in common whether or not they have been married or have lived together at any time; and individuals related by blood or affinity (in-laws, for example).

A Protection Order can:

- forbid your abuser from restraining you,
- forbid your abuser from threatening or assaulting you,
- forbid your abuser from contacting you,
- remove and exclude your abuser from your residence,
- order your abuser to stay away from certain locations, such as work, and
- grant you temporary custody of your children.

It is important to know that although a protection order may allow you to obtain temporary custody of your children, the custody provision will only last up to 90 days. If you do not have legal custody of your children and you believe your spouse may attempt to take the children, contact an attorney as soon as possible to proceed with divorce, legal separation, paternity or other court action to deal with the issues of custody and child support.

You can file for a protection order without filing for divorce. You do not need to hire an attorney to file for a protection order. There are standard forms available at the clerk of the district court's office or the local domestic violence/sexual assault program has the forms and can explain the filing process. There is no fee for filing a protection order or for subsequent court appearances (should they be necessary).

Although protection orders can be very useful and necessary, they do have their limitations. As you are probably well aware, your partner may or may not be deterred by a court order, and could still assault you before you are able to call law enforcement for assistance. You may want to discuss other options for your safety with an advocate from the local domestic violence/sexual assault program.

DIVORCE

Divorce is the dissolution of marriage. Divorce actions decide issues of child custody, child support, alimony, division of property and division of debts. Nebraska has a "no-fault" divorce statute which means it is not necessary to prove one party caused the breakup of the marriage or is at fault. Divorce proceedings are lawsuits that begin with filing a petition in district court.

The spouse who files the petition is the "petitioner" and the other spouse is the "respondent". A petition is simply a sworn statement to the court stating that the marriage is irretrievably broken and certain rights as to property and children must be determined.

You must wait 60 days after your spouse has been given notice of the proceedings before the court can hold a final hearing (or trial) on the divorce. If at the trial, the judge determines that your marriage is in fact irretrievably broken, they will sign a decree so stating. This decree is final 30 days after its issued date; however, neither party may marry until 6 months after the decree is issued.

LEGAL SEPARATION

Legal Separation is a method where a married couple lives separate and apart. It provides for the division of property, temporary custody of minor children, and child support. Essentially, you can get the same legal provisions you would in a divorce proceeding without dissolving the marriage. If you decide before the final hearing that divorce is what you want, your attorney can petition the court for a change in the decree.

If you decide you want a divorce after a decree for legal separation is entered, a new divorce action will have to be filed. Legal separation is used most often by women who; 1) have religious objections to a divorce; 2) are not sure they want a divorce, but the situation is too volatile for the women to continue living with her partner, or 3) have not met the one year state residency requirement for divorce.



After a while you learn the subtle difference
Between holding a hand and chaining a soul,

And you learn that love doesn't mean learning
And company doesn't mean security,

And you begin to learn that kisses aren't contracts
And presents aren't promises.

And you begin to accept your defeats
With your head up and your eyes open,

With the grace of a woman and not the grief of a child.

And you learn to build all your roads on today
Because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for plans,

And futures have a way of falling down in mid-flight.

After a while you learn
That even sunshine burns if you get too much.

So you plant your own garden and decorate your own soul,
Instead of waiting for someone to bring you flowers.

And you learn that you really can endure...
That you really are strong.

And you really do have worth.
And you learn and learn...

With every goodbye you learn.

AN ANONYMOUS SURVIVOR

Services in Nebraska

24 Hour Crisis Line

Confidential support, information and access to services. A list of programs begins on page 31 or call (800) 876-6238 to reach the program nearest to you.

Emergency Shelter

A safe place for women and children to escape further violence is available 24 hours a day.

Transportation

Transportation to shelter, court proceedings, medical services or other community agencies is available whenever necessary.

Medical Advocacy & Referrals

Staff and volunteers are available upon request to accompany survivors to hospital emergency rooms and local medical offices for treatment of injuries or a rape exam.

Legal Advocacy & Referrals

Assistance with obtaining a domestic abuse protection order or a harassment order, emotional support through court proceedings, and referrals to local attorneys.

On-going Support

Individual and group support for survivors of sexual assault, adult survivors of child sexual abuse and domestic violence is available in many communities. Some programs also offer groups specifically for teens and children.

Education & Prevention Programs

Prevention programs on child sexual abuse, sexual assault, domestic violence, sexual harassment and other forms of gender based violence are available for all age groups.

Nebraska's Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Programs

Family Rescue Services

(Box Butte, Dawes, Sheridan, Sioux)

P.O. Box 877, Chadron, NE 69337

(308) 432-3061

Domestic Violence Emergency Services

(Banner, Cheyenne, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff)

P.O. Box 434, Scottsbluff, NE 69363

(308) 436-4357

North Central Quad County Task Force

(Brown, Cherry, Keya Paha, Rock)

421 E 3rd Street, Valentine, NE 69201

(402) 376-5345

Domestic Abuse/Sexual Assault Services

(Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Red Willow)

P.O. Box 714, McCook, NE 69001

(308) 345-5534

Rape/Domestic Abuse Program

(Hooker, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Thomas)

P.O. Box 393, North Platte, NE 69101

(308) 534-3495

Parent-Child Center

(Dawson, Gosper)

P.O. Box 722, Lexington, NE 68850

(308) 324-3040 or (800) 215-3040

Sandhills Crisis Intervention Program

(Arthur, Deuel, Garden, Grant, Keith, Perkins)

P.O. Box 22, Ogallala, NE 69153

(308) 284-6055

Cedars Family Violence Services

(Blaine, Custer, Garfield, Greeley, Loup, Sherman,
Valley, Wheeler)

PO Box 96, Broken Bow, NE 68822

(308) 872-5988

The S.A.F.E. Center

(Buffalo, Franklin, Harlan, Kearney, Phelps)

3720 Avenue A, Suite C, Kearney, NE 68847

(308) 237-2599

The Crisis Center, Inc.

(Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick)

P.O. Box 1008, Grand Island, NE 68802

(308) 381-0555

Spouse Abuse/Sexual Assault Crisis Center

(Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, Webster)

PO Box 8, Hastings, NE 68901

(402) 463-4677

Center For Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Survivors

(Boone, Butler, Colfax, Nance, Platte, Polk)

P.O. Box 42, Columbus, NE 68601

(402) 564-2155 or (800) 658-4482

Haven House Family Service Center

(Cedar, Dakota, Dixon, Thurston, Wayne)

P.O. Box 44, Wayne NE 68787

(402) 375-4633 or (800) 440-4633

Bright Horizons

(Antelope, Boyd, Holt, Knox, Madison, Pierce, Stanton)

P.O. Box 1711, Norfolk, NE 68701

(402) 379-3798

Crisis Center for Domestic Abuse/Sexual Assault

(Burt, Cuming, Dodge, Saunders, Washington)

P.O. Box 622, Fremont, NE 68026

(402) 727-7777 or (800) 479-6221

Blue Valley Crisis Intervention

(Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Saline, Seward, Thayer, York)

P.O. Box 273, Fairbury, NE 68352

(800) 876-6238

Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center

(Lancaster)

2545 N Street, Lincoln, NE 68510

(402) 475-7273

Friendship Home

(Lancaster)

P.O. Box 85358, Lincoln, NE 68501

(402) 475-7273

Project Response

(Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson)

P.O. Box 213, Auburn, NE 68305

(800) 456-5764

Family Service Domestic Abuse Program

(Cass, Sarpy)

116 E Mission Avenue, Bellevue, NE 68005.

(402) 292-5888 or (800) 523-3666

Catholic Charities - The Shelter

(Douglas)

P.O. Box 4346, Omaha, NE 68104

(402) 558-5700

YWCA-Women Against Violence

(Douglas)

222 South 29th Street, Omaha, NE 68131

(402) 345-7273

Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault

24 hour Crisis Line

(800) 876-6238

Nebraska Domestic Violence Hotline

24 hour Crisis Line

(800) 799-SAFE (7233)

For additional information and copies of this publication:

Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition

825 M Street, Suite 404, Lincoln, NE 68508

(402) 476-6256

The Nebraska Coalition is a statewide advocacy organization that offers professional trainings and in-services, an extensive Resource Lending Library, and a variety of printed materials and publications.



Notes

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